DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 132 583 CS 203 103

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TITLE A Descriptive Study of College and University Teachers of Journalism in the United States. AASDJ Studies on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, No. 2.
INSTITUTION American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism.
PUB DATE Aug 75
NOTE 5p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Teachers; Higher Education; *Journalism; Mass Media; *National Surveys; Newspapers; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Qualifications

ABSTRACT

This descriptive study of college-level journalism teachers in the United States shows that the teachers are primarily male, young to middle aged, and distributed fairly evenly within the various academic ranks. There is a heavy midwestern emphasis in their current employment and in their academic training. The doctorate is now the modal degree in the field, although emphasis continues to be placed on the professional experience of the teacher, with newspaper experience the norm. Teaching specialties tend to follow professional lines, but there is an apparent interest in such teaching specialties as mass communication and society, theory and methodology, and history. (Author)

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AASDJ STUDIES

on education in journalism and mass communication

Number Two **August, 1975**

A Descriptive Study of College and University Teachers of Journalism in the United States

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Published serially at Austin, Texas, by the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism, Edward P. Bassett, president. The committee in charge consists of Arthur M. Barnes, Peter Clarke, Albert T. Scroggins, Jr., and Wayne A. Danielson, chairman. Correspondence concerning the publication should be directed to the chairman at the School of Communication, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, 78712. Distributed without charge to member schools of the AASDJ.

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Introduction

This report seeks to describe some of the salient characteristics of college and university journalism teachers in the United States.

Data for the report were obtained from information submitted by members of the Association for Education in Journalism for the directory of that organization published in the spring 1975 issue of Journalism Educator. On the directory forms, AEJ members were asked to give name, birthdate, degrees and years degrees were obtained, universities granting degrees, current position or rank, employing institution, media experience, teaching specialties, address and phone number. These data were coded and transferred to IBM cards for computer analysis.

Of the 1,139 members submitting directory information, 960 were classified as currently active teachers and were included in the study. These teachers represented 315 institutions in 48 states and Washington, D.C. (There were no respondents from Wyoming or Alaska.)

This study cannot be considered comprehensive since not all journalism teachers are members of AEJ and not all AEJ members submitted directory data. Nevertheless, the study does cover a large group of active and involved professionals in higher education in journalism in the United States. And in a field lacking in dependable information, the findings, even with their deficiencies, take on some significance.

Table 1. Age of Journalism Teachers Listed in the 1975 Journalism Directory

Age	Frequency	Percentage
22-35	262	27.3%
36-48	349	36.4
49-61	299	31.1
62 and over	50	5.2
	960	100.0%

Minimum age 22; maximum age 73; range 51 years; median age 44.1.

Table 2. Sex of Journalism Teachers Listed in the 1975 AEJ Directory

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	853	88.8%
Female	107	11.2
	960	100.0%

Age of Journalism Teachers

The age distribution presented in Table 1 shows an age range of journalism teachers from 22 to 73, with a median age of 44. Since teaching assistants were classified as teachers for the purposes of this study, there is probably a slight bias toward the younger age groups in the figures. The relative absence of teachers over 62 (only 5.2 per cent) may indicate that college and university administrators are being more rigorous about enforcing the retire-at-65 rule. In the past, higher education in general has been lenient in its attitude on this policy and journalism education in particular has had a generous complement of older teachers. It is possible, also, that the legendary early mortality of newspapermen carries over even to those professionals who "escape" to the supposedly leisurely life of the campus.

Sex, Race and Nationality

That journalism teaching at the college level is mainly a male profession in the United States is shown in Table 2 where 88.8 per cent of the teachers studied were male. The drive to hire more female teachers in recent years has increased their number, undoubtedly, but there are as yet few women journalism teachers in the "national pool" depicted by this study. Since undergraduate classes are now nearing or exceeding a 50-50 ratio of women to men in many schools, however, administrators may expect that more qualified female teachers will be coming onto the job market in the decade ahead.

Although questions on race and nationality were not included on the directory forms, an informal analysis revealed that 27 respondents had Spanish or Oriental surnames and an estimated 8 were black. Minority teachers in journalism higher education, as estimated from these data, amount to no more than 4-5 per cent of the total. The drive to attract minority students and teachers to journalism education obviously has a long way to go.

Where Teachers Teach

The dominance of the Midwest in journalism education is shown in Table 3 which reveals that 28.2 per cent of those surveyed teach at institutions in the East North Central states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. An additional 12.4 per cent teach in the West North Central states of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North and South Dakota and Kansas, and 11.5 per cent teach in the West South Central states of Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas.

Other regions with substantial numbers of journalism teachers are the South Atlantic States and the Pacific states of Washington, Oregon and California. (Alaska and Hawaii, also in the Pacific region, have been less heavily involved in journalism education at the college level.)

New England, with its long tradition of private colleges and universities, supplied only 2.3 per cent of the teachers surveyed, and the East South Central and Mountain regions were relatively low contributors with 5.7 and 5.5 per cent, respectively. The heavily populated Middle Atlantic states of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania produced 9.0 per cent of the teachers studied.

Although the allegation that the East dominates American journalism may have a measure of truth to it, it is apparent that the Midwest dominates journalism education, at least in terms of employment of college journalism teachers.

Institutions Granting Most Degrees

Further evidence of midwestern dominance in college and university journalism education is given by Table 4 which lists in rank order the 20 universities awarding the most "final degrees" to journalism teachers. The 20 schools accounted for nearly two-thirds of all final degrees held by the teachers surveyed.

Of the 20 schools, nine were in the East North Central region; three were in the West North Central; three were in the Middle Atlantic; three the Pacific, and two the West South Central.

By and large, the midwestern schools were early in providing graduate education in journalism; this was especially true of the doctoral programs in journalism and communication. It is not surprising, therefore, that the leading producers of terminal degrees for journalism teachers are the midwestern schools. With the spread of graduate programs to schools in other regions, the midwestern dominance will no doubt slowly decline.

Table 3. Number of Journalism Teachers Employed at Institutions in Nine Census Regions

Region	Frequency	Percentage
New England	22	2.3%
Middle Atlantic	86	9.0
East North Central	263	27.4
West North Central	119	12.4
South Atlantic	118	12.3
East South Central	55	5.7
West South Central	110	11.5
Mountain	53	5.5
Pacific	108	11.2
Blank	26	2.7
	960	100.0%

Table 4. Twenty Universities Awarding Most Degrees to Journalism Teachers Listed in 1975 AEJ Directory

University	Frequency	Percentage
1. U. Wis., Madison	82	8.5%
2. U. Minn., Minneapolis	71	7.2
3. U. of Iowa	60	6.3
4. U. of Missouri	55	5.7
5. U. of Illinois	45	4.7
6. Northwestern U.	41	4.3
7. S. Ill. U.	36	3.7
8. Stanford U.	31	3.2
9. Michigan State U.	29	3.0
10. Columbia U.	26	2.7
11. Syracuse U.	22	2.3
12. Ohio U., Athens	21	2.2
13. Ohio State U.	20	2.1
14. Indiana U.	16	1.7
15. U. Texas, Austin	15	1.6
16. UCLA	15	1.6
17. U. Oklahoma	14	1.4
18. U. Michigan	12	1.2
19. U.S. Calif.	11	1.1
20. New York U.	9	0.9
	631	65.4%*

*Percentages are based on total sample N of 960.

Table 5. Highest Degree Held by Journalism Teachers Listed in 1975 AEJ Directory

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Doctorate	469	48.9%
Master's	430	44.8
Bachelor's	51	5.3
No degree listed	10	1.0
	960	100.0%

Highest Degrees Held

Serving a professional field as it does, journalism education long has emphasized the professional experience of its teachers, many of whom have not earned the doctorate, the traditional "terminal degree" in many other areas of the university.

Data from this study indicate, however, that the doctorate is now the modal degree, with 48.9 per cent of the teachers listing it. (See Table 5.) An additional 44.8 per cent list their final degree as the master's, with only 5.3 per cent (mainly the teaching assistants included in the study) listing the bachelor's degree.

With a steady demand and need for scholarship on the part of faculty members as well as for teaching excellence, it is likely that the percentage of journalism teachers with doctoral degrees will rise in the years ahead. The increase in schools offering graduate programs leading to the doctorate should also contribute to the available pool of teachers holding the degree, thus making it easier for administrators to recruit at the doctoral level if they wish to do so. It should be observed, also, that many doctoral-level students in such "overproduced" areas as English and political science have had journalistic experience along the way and may be more inclined now than in the past to consider teaching careers on journalism faculties.

Academic Ranks

Table 6 shows the percentages of teachers studied who hold teaching positions at various academic ranks. The data contain a fairly large "other" category (5.9 per cent) since a number of respondents listed their administrative titles — dean, department chairman, etc. — and did not provide data on their ranks. It is likely that most of these "others" would divide between the ranks of professor and associate professor.

The distribution, in general, is fairly even among the ranks, a finding which goes along with the youthful to middle-aged character of journalism faculties in the United States. The numbers in the lower ranks probably are a sign of expanding faculties, also, since newer teachers usually are hired at the lower levels. The findings could also indicate slower advancement in rank for journalism teachers, due to the lower incidence of doctoral degrees or to late entrance into teaching because of years spent gaining professional experience. In any case, it appears that on a national basis, journalism faculties may not be as "locked in" with tenured teachers as are faculties in some other divisions of the university.

Table 6. Academic Rank of Journalism Teachers Listed in 1975 AEJ Directory

Rank	Frequency	Percentage
Professor	271	28.3%
Assoc. Professor	224	23.3
Asst. Professor	256	26.7
Instructor	79	8.2
Lecturer	26	2.7
Teaching Asst.	47	4.9
Other*	57	5.9
	960	100.0%

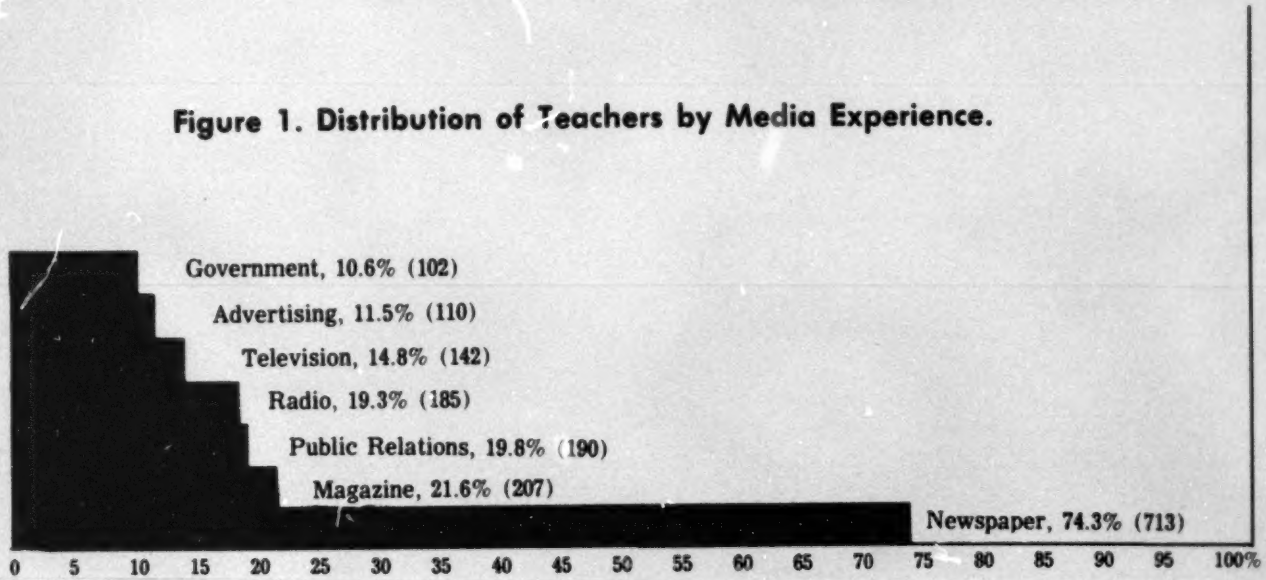
*Other includes teachers who did not indicate their rank or who gave only titles such as Dept. Head, Dean, Chairman, etc.

Media Experience of Teachers

Figure 1 depicts graphically the media experience mentioned by journalism teachers in their 1975 AEJ directory listings. AEJ members had 15 words each in which to describe their professional experience and the words were no doubt chosen carefully. It is interesting, therefore, that nearly three-fourths of the teachers mentioned having newspaper experience. The next closest category was magazines with 21.6 per cent mentioning experience in the area. The traditional dominance of print journalism and particularly newspaper journalism in the journalism schools and departments is clearly depicted here.

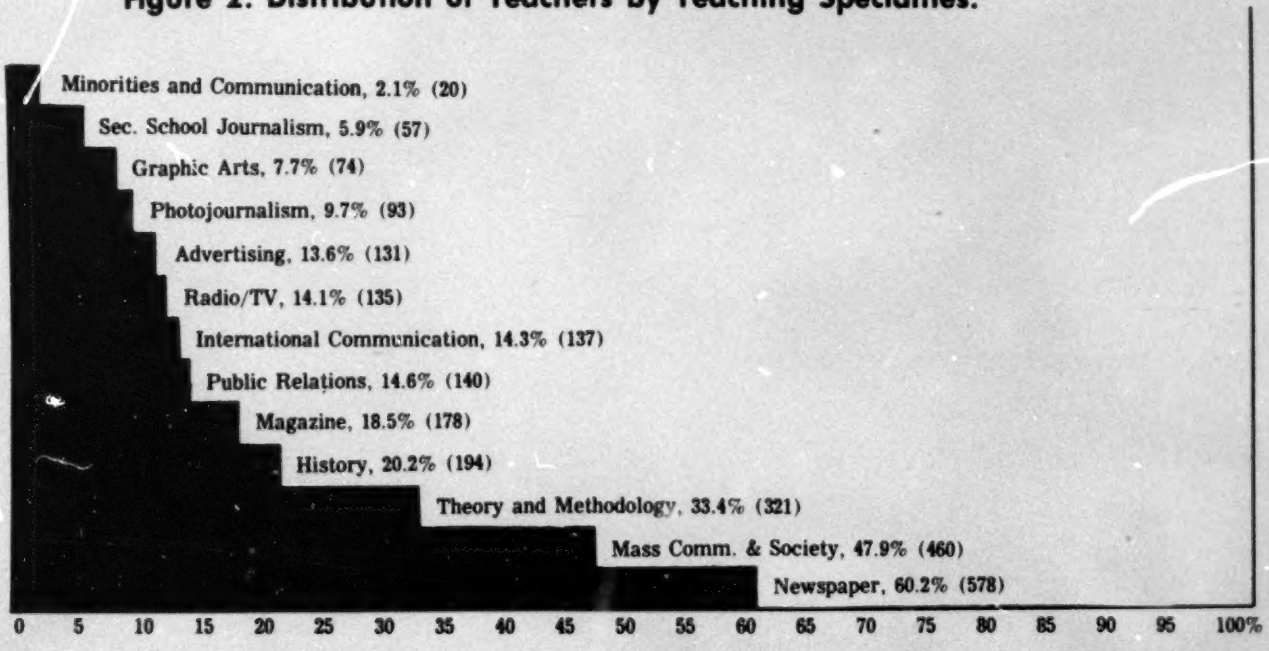
Figure 2 shows a similar dominance of newspapers in the teaching specialties mentioned by college journalism teachers in their directory entries. A "newspaper" teaching specialty was mentioned by 60.2 per cent of those studied. Other frequently cited specialties were mass communication and society, theory and methodology, and history. Listings taper down from these specialties to such fields as graphic arts (7.7 per cent), secondary school journalism (5.9 per cent) and minorities and communication (2.1 per cent). The coding categories used were the "divisions" or "interest groups" of AEJ and an important category, law and ethics, was inadvertently omitted. It may be of note that eight of the 13 teaching specialties are occupationally related, dealing with newspapers, magazines, public relations, etc. But it is perhaps of equal interest — and a trend to watch — that such "theoretical" specialties as mass communication and society, theory and methodology, and history are among the more popular specialties mentioned.

Figure 1. Distribution of Teachers by Media Experience.



N 960 Multiple responses permitted.

Figure 2. Distribution of Teachers by Teaching Specialties.


Minorities and Communication, 2.1% (20)
Sec. School Journalism, 5.9% (57)
Graphic Arts, 7.7% (74)
Photojournalism, 9.7% (93)
Advertising, 13.6% (131)
Radio/TV, 14.1% (135)
International Communication, 14.3% (137)
Public Relations, 14.6% (140)
Magazine, 18.5% (178)
History, 20.2% (194)
Theory and Methodology, 33.4% (321)
Mass Comm. & Society, 47.9% (460)
Newspaper, 60.2% (578)
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90 95 100%

N 960 Multiple responses permitted.

Summary and Conclusion

This descriptive study of college level journalism teachers in the United States shows that the teachers are in the main male, young to middle-aged, and distributed fairly evenly in the various academic ranks. There is a heavy midwestern emphasis in their current employment and in their academic training. The doctorate is now the modal degree in the field, although emphasis continues to be placed on the professional experience of the teacher with newspaper experience the norm. Teaching specialties tend to follow professional lines, but there is an apparent interest in such teaching specialties as mass communication and society, theory and methodology and history.